



Region 4
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls MT 59405-0901

**Environmental Assessment Decision Notice
for the Mountain Acres Fishing Access Site Proposed Acquisition
June 20, 2011**

Proposal

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) proposes to purchase 6.27-acres of land currently owned by the Mountain Acres Mobile Home Park to allow public access and stream restoration of Big Spring Creek. The proposed action would be a fee title acquisition for \$64,000. The property is located on the south side of Big Spring Creek on the north side of Lewistown, Montana. This proposed acquisition would enhance a collaborative effort between FWP, Fergus Conservation District (FCD), Trout Unlimited and others to develop a recreation corridor and provide stream restoration on this and other nearby parcels. As part of the stream restoration project to return Big Spring Creek to its historic channel pattern, approximately 500 feet of stream would be added on the Mountain Acres parcel proposed acquisition. This Environmental Assessment (EA) addresses the acquisition of the property only. A separate EA would be issued prior to any stream restoration or site development work.

Montana Environmental Policy Act Process (MEPA) and Public Involvement

On May 19, 2011, FWP released a draft environmental assessment (EA) for the Mountain Acres Fishing Access Site Parcel Proposed Acquisition. The EA evaluated the potential impacts of the following alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action

If no action were taken, the property would not be purchased and the property would continue under private ownership. If not acquired, the opportunity to expand stream length, the fishery, and public access would be limited.

Preferred Alternative B: Proposed Action

In the preferred alternative, FWP would acquire the 6.274-acre Mountain Acres vacant lot parcel in fee title for \$64,000 including deeded access to the parcel from Fergus Street in Lewistown. The purpose of the proposed acquisition is to facilitate the long-term stream restoration along the Big Spring Creek to increase the overall stream length, providing additional fish habitat, and to provide public access to this fishery.

FWP would install information and regulation signs, as well as property boundary markers.

Summary of Public Comment

Six comments were received from five respondents during the public comment period. Three respondents to the proposed action voiced support for Alternative B as the preferred alternative. No comments voiced opposition to the acquisition of the parcel. Two respondents voiced concern regarding the restoration of stream meanders in this section; both raised the issue that remeandering would increase flooding potential in the project reach. The proposed design for restoration will actually reduce flooding potential of nearby property by increasing the floodplain width at existing elevations. One respondent requested filling of the old stream channel and requested information demonstrating the property value of his home located on a rental lot will not be affected by the stream restoration. These issues, however, are beyond the scope of this Environmental Assessment, which addresses only the acquisition of the Mountain Acres parcel. These issues will be addressed in a separate EA that would be available for public comment prior to any stream restoration or site development work.

Revisions to the Draft Environmental Assessment

There were no potentially significant negative impacts raised during the public comment period that relate to the acquisition of the parcel; therefore, there are no substantive changes to the draft EA, and the draft EA becomes the final EA. The Draft EA, together with this decision notice, will serve as the final document for this proposal.

Decision

I find there to be no significant impact on the human or physical environment associated with this proposed acquisition, except to increase public access along Big Spring Creek. Therefore, I conclude the Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis, and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. Based on the environmental assessment and public comment, it is my decision to recommend to the FWP Commission that the FWP proceed with the proposed action, Alternative B, to acquire the Mountain Acres Fishing Access Site Parcel for inclusion into the FAS program.



Gary Bertellotti
Region 4 Supervisor

Date: June 20, 2011